

# Rural District Council of Wells.

## REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1898.

GLASTONBURY, SOMERSET,

FEBRUARY 6TH, 1899.

To the Rural District Council of Wells.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Annual Report for 1898.

Observing the order usually followed, I mention first;—

**Area** Area of District, 55,888 Acres.

**Population** Population of District, 11,398 (Census 1891).

**Conformation and Geology** Varying from Dolomitic Conglomerate, Carboniferous Limestone, and Lower Lias, to River Gravel, Peat, and Alluvium in certain localities, with nearly all these formations in the large Out-parish of Wells.

**Occupation** Chiefly Agricultural; Cheese and Cider Making; Dairies; Grazing; and Paper Factories. Many of the inhabitants of Butleigh, Walton, and Sharp-ham are employed in the Shoe and Leather Factories of Street and Glastonbury.

|                         | 1898.                            | 1897. |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Birth Rate</b>       | 22·37 per 1000 population living | 22·72 |
| <b>Death Rate</b>       | 20·0 „ „ „                       | 21·3  |
| <b>Zymotic Rate</b>     | 1·75 „ „ „                       | 1·31  |
| <b>Infant Mortality</b> | 105·88 per 1000 births           | 104·0 |

(NOTE.—The Death Rate of 20·0 is computed on the whole number of Deaths occurring within the District, and includes Deaths occurring within the District among Persons not belonging thereto. After deducting these Deaths, which number 70, and most of which occurred in the County Lunatic Asylum at Wells, the Rate is reduced to 13·86.)

**Water Supply** Most of the Parishes are well supplied with water, and in those which by reason of their position are ill supplied, the source is under frequent observa-tion, in order that contamination may not take place.

In 1896 I reported three Parishes as badly supplied with water, viz., Baltonsborough, Godney, and Sharp-ham.

Baltonsborough—The supply is chiefly derived from pools, dug in the clay (for the most part ill-protected), rain-water tanks, and river water. During the year the question of a supply by gravitation from the neighbouring hills has been under consideration. Different schemes have been projected, but owing to the difficulty of obtaining a sufficient supply no definite plan has yet been decided upon.

Godney—The supply is almost entirely from the River, but there are a few wells on the strip of higher ground which runs through the parish. Plans are being discussed, and different springs watched, with a view to adopting the gravitation system for a general supply to the village.

Sharp-ham—The supply here is obtained partly from the canal and partly from rain-water tanks. I have recommended that each house be supplied with a large rain-water storage tank, as owing to the paucity of inhabitants no other plan of a general nature is feasible.

Samples of water from numerous wells and other sources (especially in the three above-mentioned parishes) have been tested by me during the year. A specimen of water from one of the springs suggested for the general supply of Godney was tested by the County Analyst, Dr. Alford, of Taunton, with satisfactory result.

**Drainage and Excrement Disposal** No general system of drainage exists. In a few villages partial systems exist, but are not always very satisfactory. Drainage nuisances are infrequent, and promptly dealt with when they occur. (*Vide* Inspectors' Reports).

The sewage of three towns, viz., Wells, Shepton Mallet, and Glastonbury, drains into the District. The two former towns have sewage works, situated in Coxley and Croscombe respectively, while Glastonbury has a sewage farm at Sharpham. As Croscombe is situated without the Wells Rural District, it is only the *effluent* from the Shepton Mallet sewage works which reaches the district by means of a stream into which it is discharged, and which flows through Dinder and Wells Out-parish.

Owing to complaints of nuisance caused by these, I have visited all three during the year. In the case of Wells sewage works the matter was immediately dealt with in a temporary manner, but as new works are in contemplation on the Septic-Tank system, no steps were then taken to render recurrence of the nuisance impossible.

At Shepton Mallet sewage works I was satisfied that everything possible was being done to render the effluent as pure as possible, and with excellent results, as proved by chemical examination.

At the sewage farm at Sharpham, much care is exercised to prevent nuisance arising from the sewage, and I have not yet found any real cause for complaint.

**Privies** By frequent recommendation, and pressure wherever possible, the privy accommodation is gradually improving, dry earth closets having been substituted for many of the old-fashioned privies.

**Prevalence of Disease** Infectious Sickness.—Twenty cases of notifiable Disease (15 in 1897).  
**Scarlet Fever** One case at Westbury. No spread.

**Diphtheria** Seven cases. Four in one house at Rodney Stoke. The first of these four seems to have become infected at Cheddar, where Diphtheria was prevalent at the time, three of his family taking the disease from him on his return home. Two of the remaining cases occurred in the Out-parish of Wells. For one no cause could be found, while in the other case the house drainage was defective. The seventh came from Wells Grammar School whilst ill.

**Enteric Fever** Six cases. Three in Meare, two traced to polluted water, one cause unknown. Two in Chewton Mendip, no cause found. One in the Cottage Hospital, Wells.

**Erysipelas** Six cases. Three at the County Asylum, Wells, two at Chewton Mendip, and one at Walton.

**Whooping Cough** Two deaths.

**Diarrhoea** Two deaths.

| Tuberculous Diseases |                             |     | 1898. |     |       |     | 1897. |     |     |     | 1896. |     |     |     | 1895. |     |     |     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
|                      |                             |     | ...   | ... | ...   | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... |
|                      | Phthisis (lungs) ...        | ... | ...   | 16  | cases | 19  | ...   | 24  | ... | 23  | ...   | ... | ... | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... |
|                      | Acute Tuberculosis ...      | ... | ...   | 2   | ...   | 2   | ...   | 3   | ... | 1   | ...   | ... | ... | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... |
|                      | Tubercular Meningitis ...   | ... | ...   | 2   | ...   | 0   | ...   | 1   | ... | 1   | ...   | ... | ... | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... |
|                      | Tubercular Appendicitis ... | ... | ...   | 1   | ...   | 0   | ...   | 0   | ... | 0   | ...   | ... | ... | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... |
|                      | Tubercular Peritonitis ...  | ... | ...   | 0   | ...   | 0   | ...   | 2   | ... | 0   | ...   | ... | ... | ... | ...   | ... | ... | ... |
|                      |                             |     | Total |     |       | ... | 21    | 21  | 30  | 25  |       |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |

**Accidents** Seven Fatal Accidents.

**Isolation Hospital** There is as yet no Hospital for reception and isolation of infectious cases, but the matter is still under consideration.

**Disinfecting Machine** There is no public disinfecting apparatus.

**House Disinfection** Disinfection and fumigation have been carried out in 10 houses by the Inspectors.

**School Closure** Has not been necessary during the year.

**Overcrowding** Several cases reported.

**General Inspection** General inspection has been carried out from time to time, including inspection of Public Schools and Buildings, Slaughter-houses, Bakehouses, &c.

I append the Annual Statistical Returns of Births, Deaths, and Infectious Sickness, and the Reports of the Inspectors of Nuisances,

And remain, Gentlemen,  
Yours faithfully,

JOSHUA C. SMYTH,  
*Medical Officer of Health.*

# Reports and Summaries of Inspectors of Nuisances.

## DISTRICT No. 1.

I beg to forward you a summary of the several cases that have come to my notice during the past year as Sanitary Inspector of District No. 1.

|                                                                                                                          |     |     |     |     |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Imperfect drains repaired                                                                                                | ... | ... | ... | ... | 5  |
| Infected Dwellings, Occupiers served with notices as to isolation of patients, and disinfecting dwellings, clothing, &c. | ... | ... | ... | ... | 7  |
| Disinfection of dwellings and clothing under direction of Medical Officer of Health                                      | ... | ... | ... | ... | 7  |
| Nuisances caused by drainage from manure heaps (abated)                                                                  | ..  | ... | ... | ... | 5  |
| House drainage into road drains causing a nuisance (abated)                                                              | ... | ... | ... | ... | 8  |
| Nuisance caused by putrid meat                                                                                           | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1  |
| Samples of Water submitted to Medical Officer of Health for examination                                                  | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2  |
| Cases of overcrowding dealt with                                                                                         | ... | ... | ... | ... | 6  |
| Dangerous buildings removed                                                                                              | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3  |
| New buildings inspected for certificates of occupation (granted)                                                         | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3  |
| Foul tank and dirty closets                                                                                              | ... | ..  | ... | ... | 8  |
| Bakehouses, Slaughter-houses, and Offices of Public Schools inspected                                                    | ... | ... | ... | ... | 24 |
| Reported cases of pigs being kept so as to be a nuisance                                                                 | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2  |

NOTE.—The foregoing does not include all cases where inspections have been made, the nuisances being abated by verbal notice.

STUCKEY FRITH, Inspector No. 1 District.

## DISTRICT No. 2.

I beg to submit to you my annual summary of work done as Inspector of Nuisances for District No. 2 of the Wells Rural District Council for the year ending December 31st, 1898.

As directed by the general order of the Local Government Board, prescribing the duties of Inspectors of Nuisances, I have during the year endeavoured by inspection of the district, both systematically and at certain periods, as well as at intervals as occasion required, to keep myself informed in respect of nuisances existing therein which required abatement; attended to all complaints made to me as well as all meetings of the Council, and carried out their instructions, as also the directions of the Medical Officer of Health for the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases.

The following is a summary of the cases reported by me to the Council and dealt with by order :—

|                                                                                                                                                                        |     |     |     |     |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Nuisances such as foul and choked drains, foul and defective privies and foul accumulations, etc.                                                                      | ... | ... | ... | ... | 50 |
| Animals so kept as to be a nuisance                                                                                                                                    | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3  |
| Infected Dwellings, Occupiers served with notices as to isolation of patient and disinfection of dwellings, &c., disinfectants supplied by the Council where necessary | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3  |
| Dwellings and clothing dininfected under the directions of the Medical Officer of Health                                                                               | ... | ... | ... | ..  | 3  |
| Cases of overcrowding dealt with (1 abated, the other still under notice)                                                                                              | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2  |
| New Sewers laid and cleansed                                                                                                                                           | ... | ... | ... | ... | 4  |
| Pollution of Stream dealt with                                                                                                                                         | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1  |
| Samples of Water submitted to Medical Officer of Health                                                                                                                | ... | ... | ... | ... | 6  |
| Wells cleansed and supplies of water protected from pullution by order of the Council                                                                                  | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3  |
| Bake-houses, Slaughter-houses, and Offices of Public Schools inspected under ordinary inspections (no Bye-laws in force)                                               | ... | ... | ... | ... | 29 |
| I have also, as directed by the Council, made a special house to house inspection of the village of Godney, and reported thereon as to the water supply                | ... | ... | ... | ... | 47 |
| I have also made a special inspection of the Parish of Sharpham                                                                                                        | ... | ... | ... | ... | 21 |
| I have also made a special inspection and report on 14 cases in the Parish of Baltonsborough as to water supply                                                        | ... | ... | ... | ... | 14 |

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NOTE.—The foregoing includes but a very small portion of the inspections made and verbal notices given by the Inspector in his rounds and periodical visits.

EDWIN H. PADFIELD, Inspector No. 2 District.

With a single supplement.